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The Truth About
MADAME
BLAVATSKY

Walter A. Carrithers, Jr.

Theosophical University Press
COVINA CALIFORNIA

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Publishers' Note

PRIESTESS OF THE OCCULT: MADAME BLAVATSKY by Gertrude Marvin Williams is one more effort to attack and defame the life and name of H. P. B. As is always the case, each attack brings to the front defenders, not all members of or associated with any Theosophical Society. Men and women of independent thought and strong sense of justice resent muck-raking "biographies," especially when the victim is no longer alive to refute the charges.

Mrs. Williams' book has called forth many letters of condemnation from Theosophists and non-Theosophists alike. The following letter addressed to Mrs. Williams is one. It does not by any means cover the entire subject; a volume could be written — and probably will be — taking Mrs. Williams' work to pieces point by point. Mr. Carrithers' excellent letter covers but a few of the points which make the book vulnerable.

While the editors of Theosophical University Press are in full sympathy with all defences of H. P. B., they cannot be responsible for the wording of a private or open letter of any friend of the Great Theosophist.

As long as attacks on the personality of Madame Blavatsky stir lovers of Truth and the Ancient Wisdom to scholarly and enthusiastic rebuttal, we may safely say: Madame, your last incarnation has not been a failure!

An Open Letter to the Author of
"Priestess of the Occult"

REGARDING THE CHARGES AGAINST
H. P. BLAVATSKY

By
Walter A. Carrithers, Jr.

Preface

OWING to the fact that the popular press has almost unanimously boycotted all facts in favor of H. P. Blavatsky, and that the writer himself was unable to undertake the independent publication of this material, *The Truth about Madame Blavatsky* was first submitted to the leading Theosophical publishing houses of America. The writer wishes to extend impartial thanks to all of those who, though unable to aid his literary endeavor, have volunteered their advice and best wishes.*

But above all, he wishes to commend the Theosophical University Press for its whole-hearted support of this opportune tribute to H. P. Blavatsky on the 70th Anniversary of her first literary work, *Isis Unveiled*. To every Theosophist, it will be significant that the scurrilous barrage under discussion was launched at H. P. B. in the *seventh* year of the tenth *septenary* cycle of her first publication!

Regardless of belief or affiliation, Theosophists everywhere must unite in that one universal conviction: The *entire innocence* of H. P. B.

All admirers of H. P. Blavatsky, all lovers of Truth, all vigilant inquirers everywhere, must make that one affirmation an undying flame at that great martyr's shrine!

— W. A. C.

*[The writer is not a member of the Theosophical Society, nor has he ever been affiliated with any mystical or occult group.]

1877 — 1947

THE MERCENARIES AND PARASITES OF THE PRESS, WHO PROSTITUTE ITS MORE THAN ROYAL POWER, WILL FIND IT EASY TO MOCK AT THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND; FOR TO THEM THE PRICE OF A PARAGRAPH IS MORE THAN THE VALUE OF SINCERITY.

— H. P. BLAVATSKY, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. I, p. viii
September, 1877

Introduction

THIS pamphlet is a reply to *Priestess of the Occult* (Gertrude Marvin Williams, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1946). It is a discussion of certain well-known, but illegitimate, methods of journalism. It is a direct and unequivocal refutation (based on irrevocable fact and evidence) of baseless charges and fictitious histories. And it is a challenge to specious editorial policies and questionable publishing practices.

Gertrude Marvin Williams, in her biographical work, has attempted to portray the life of Madame Blavatsky. It will be shown that her attempt was not, apparently, made in good faith — for, unfortunately, her literary data has been built of the debris that seventy years of slander have cast up on the sands of time. She has made charges of the gravest nature. But, as the reader will see, these charges are here met fully and fairly on the judgment of proof, and *utterly discredited!*

Further than this, however, counter-charges are directed against Mrs. Williams and her propaganda-agents, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. — and an invitation to an open discussion of charges, proofs, and evidence has been made. *Not only has the refutation-evidence received no attempted disproof, but the counter-charges have been unanswered, and both the author and her publishers have hastily rejected the invitation to defend "Priestess of the Occult"!*

* * * *

G. BASEDEN BUTT once wrote, (*Madame Blavatsky*, page 2)
"Madame Blavatsky was either incredibly wicked, or else was one

of the most deeply wronged women known to history!" WHAT she was is the problem of the question and charges at hand. WHO she was is easily stated.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was the Founder of the Theosophical Movement; the literary-source of modern Occult Philosophy; and, without doubt, the most dynamic woman and the most baffling character of the Nineteenth Century.

In less than sixteen years, with world psychology at the zenith of a mechanistic-materialism, H. P. Blavatsky, almost alone and unaided, threw open the gates of Western speculation to the profoundest spiritual philosophies of the East.

Challenging alike dogmatic science and bigoted theology, H. P. B. (as she was called by her students) advanced the most disquieting claims before that Victorian age. She declared that she brought a message from Tibet to the Western world, a teaching that is "the sub-stratum and basis of all world-religions and philosophies, taught and practiced by a few elect ever since man became a thinking being."¹ She maintained that this Primordial Wisdom, this *Theosophia* or "Divine Knowledge" survives in its original virginity, tended by the devotion of certain Eastern Adepts, Mahatmas, living Sages who have pursued the evolution of human nature to the extremities of spiritual perfection. She reaffirmed the reality of ancient Magic, illustrating with apt demonstration the analogies of Theurgy and the supernormal phenomena of modern Spiritualism.

But the immediate discussion is not one of philosophical exposition — but the charge of her critics that Madame Blavatsky was a *charlatan!*

The charge is neither new nor original with *Priestess of the Occult*. The accusation hounded H. P. B. from the founding of her Theosophical Society to the day of her demise — and, when her ever-pungent pen was stilled in self-defence by death, the volley of imputation increased ten-fold. It has been alleged by an endless procession of ferocious critics that Madame Blavatsky was, among less gentle things, a French adventuress, a Russian spy, an embezzler, a blackmailer, a forger, a plagiarist, a drunkard, a dope fiend, a fraudulent Spiritist medium, a Satanist, an atheist, a Jesuit, and a bigamist.

1. *Theosophical Glossary*, p. 328

Madame Blavatsky's apologists contend, with some reason, that her foes, unable to stem the irresistible logic of her philosophy and the intractable vitality of her pen, have struck the foulest of all blows — and have sought to discredit her writings by *personal* defamation.

Gertrude Marvin Williams, former newspaper journalist and self-appointed "cult" doctor or critic, is the latest scribe to nurse some of the more intelligible of these imposing charges. Her book would hardly merit any attention were it not a veritable *encyclopedic* reiteration of accusation. Mrs. Williams has consumed 354 pages with a grand and splashing panorama of infamy. The six great, concluding allegations of her pretentious "research" are that:

I. Madame Blavatsky's claim to having visited Tibet was a "smoke-screen" to obscure her "scandalous conduct." (See *Priestess of the Occult*, p. 26.)

II. Madame Blavatsky's most formidable claim to recognition, her literature, is dismissed by "scholars" as "inaccurate plagiarisms," and is the product of a ludicrous "fumbling" with Eastern Philosophy. (*Ibid.*, pp. 209-11.)

III. Madame Blavatsky's claim of special knowledge and powers for "Tibetan Adepts" is an "imposition on credulity." (*Ibid.*, p. 30.)

IV. Madame Blavatsky's life was not "chaste in the austere paths of Occultism," but was a riot of lust and ignominy. (*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

V. Madame Blavatsky was "exposed" in "flagrant fraud" by the English Society for Psychical Research; and one of her "confederates," a Mme. Coulomb, produced Madame's own letters to substantiate the "exposure." (*Ibid.*, pp. 10 and 230.)

VI. Madame Blavatsky's allegiance to "Mahatmas" or "Masters" was only play, since the "messages and letters from Masters" were her own deceitful handiwork. (*Ibid.*, p. 165.)

Mrs. Williams summarizes H. P. B.'s life as a "musky" morass of ". . . scandals, shadows of lovers dead and gone, bigamous marriages, an illegitimate son, fraud and trickery *de luxe*."

(*Ibid.*, p. 7.)

Now the reaffirmation of any charge is worthless without definite

or actual proof. The question, therefore, is: Has Mrs. Williams, *with the accumulated "evidence" of all previous critics*, PROVED her charges against H. P. Blavatsky? What examination will the basic conclusions of her book bear? And is there any unquestionable *proof* to the contrary?

With these questions in mind, the writer unsuccessfully attempted to engage the author and her publishers in open correspondence regarding the final validity of any accusations against H. P. B. On December 13, 1946, I dispatched the following registered air-mail letter to the author. With the addition of explanatory footnotes, it is here reprinted.

The Exposure of an "Exposé"

GERTRUDE MARVIN WILLIAMS,
c/o Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.,
501 Madison Ave,
New York City.

December 10, 1946.

Dear Madame:

After prolonged consideration, and on the advice of the Editors of *Newsweek Magazine*² I am writing in regard to your current book, *Priestess of the Occult*. Although you are undoubtedly aware of most of the following facts and questions, I only anticipate that my own observations may sustain previous objections.

To the casual reader, your detailed biography of H. P. Blavatsky gives evidence of sincerity of scholarship and accomplishment. But from an intimate examination, it reveals only a *superficial* appearance of finality.

Hugh D. Beach of *Newsweek Magazine* assures me that you maintain:

"Theosophists never attempted to dispute my statements about Besant nor can they in regard to Blavatsky. They are annoyed because my research brings into the open matters which they try to forget. I have tried to be scrupulously fair and to be considerate of devotees. My books are carefully documented. . . ."³

The idea that Theosophists (or, perhaps, anyone else for that matter) can never dispute your beliefs regarding Mme. Blavatsky is only a naive, personal assumption on your part — what a psychologist might call a "wish-fantasy." No one is annoyed because your "research" brings into the open any perturbing matters. These "matters" are well-worn by now, and can always be competently

2. *Vide* Letter of reply, dated December 5, 1946. "If you would like to continue this discussion any further, we would suggest that you write to Mrs. Williams herself. . . . Hugh D. Beach for the Editors of *Newsweek* magazine, HDB. BSW."

3. *Ibid.*

answered by well-informed "devotees." Their current re-presentation is only a re-hash of previous "biographies" — with a special debt evidently due to Carl Eric Bechofer-Roberts and his blasphemously foul *The Mysterious Madame* (Brewer & Warren, 1931).

As to the "careful" documentation of your book, it appears that the author herself, indeed! is the one who "wishes to forget" — and has really already forgotten certain "matters." Consider the following undeniable facts, quite significantly and *prudently* missing from *Priestess of the Occult*:

I. H. P. B.'s TRAVELS IN TIBET

Writing in 1883, H. P. B. says, "I have lived in different periods in Little Tibet as well as in Great Tibet, and these combined periods form more than seven years. . . . I have stopped in Lamaistic convents, visited Shigatse, the Tashi-Lumpo territory and its neighborhood, and have been further into, and visited such places of Tibet as have never been visited by other Europeans."⁴

You class these claims under the order of hashish delirium or blatant imposture. *But it is interesting to note some of the many facts, necessarily suppressed by your book!*

Your "biography" fastidiously by-passes the fact that, after Mme. Blavatsky's death,⁵ Major-General C. Murray (in 1854, Captain of Her Majesty's Sebundy Sappers and Miners at Punkabaree, beyond Darjeeling on the borders of Nepal) testified in a sworn affidavit that he had detained H. P. Blavatsky in an attempted penetration of Tibet — "to gather material for a book, as she said."⁶

Equally ignored is the testimony of Major Cross, Managing Proctor to estates of His Majesty, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, who in 1927 on a home visit from the East, declared that he had " . . . traced the progress of a white woman in 1867, through the most difficult country of Tibet to a lamasery in the far north, through the recol-

4. See *A Modern Panarion*, London, 1895.

5. There is no record that H. P. B. ever called on Murray or anyone else to substantiate her claims, for fear of exposing them before the prejudiced blast of public ridicule — she suffered, uncredited, in silence!

6. See Col. H. S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. I, pp. 264-5. Theosophical Publishing House, London, 1895, Adyar, 1941.

lections of various old natives who were impressed by the personality of this unusual visitor. . . ." He identified her with Madame Blavatsky.⁷

Here is proof of prime importance — skillfully left unmentioned by a supposed biographer! Why? Because neither testimony can be explained away on a wretched hypothesis of fraud! General Murray's testimony was published at the time of his declaration, and he never retracted his statement. It cannot be excused on objections of "forgery" or fiction — nor would a high officer of the *elite* of British India publicly *lie* to gratify strangers, the ostracized devotees of a public-condemned "accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposter." No critic has ever sought to assail the character of C. Murray; no skeptic has ever challenged his assertion; and Gertrude Marvin Williams very conveniently *forgets* it!!

Beyond this, the same holds true in the case of Major Cross. There are, moreover, still living in Canada, those who witnessed his declaration — and we leave the assassination of these witnesses to future, more imaginative "biographers"!

This is a fact that, by itself, impugns the very veracity of your book. Here is a fact that bears the most vital relationship to Mme. Blavatsky's claims, to her subsequent career, and to her entire life work. That she was the first white woman to penetrate Tibet⁸ — *and that alone*; that at twenty-three, she was the youngest European ever to assault those Himalayan gates ("in quest of those Great Teachers beyond the Snowy Range," as she said) — *all of this is a fact proven on irrefutable testimony!*

II. H. P. B.'s WRITINGS

In her great works, *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Voice of the Silence* et al., H. P. Blavatsky asserted that she was, under the instruction of certain Tibetan Initiates, giving to the Western World certain essential tenets of a great secret tradition, hitherto partially concealed under the bonds of arcane darkness. As a reviewer summarizes it, you declare this to be sheer "poppycock" and

7. See *The Canadian Theosophist*, June, 1927.

8. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 183-5. Edition of 1944.

insist that her literary production is gross plagiarism when not crass invention.

But your hypothesis is tenable only if we limit our considerations to your own evidence — and avoid any other!

The Oxford scholar, W. Y. Evans-Wentz, M.A., D.LITT., B.Sc., in his *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford University Press, 1925) page 7, writes, "The late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup⁹ was of the opinion that, despite the adverse criticisms directed against H. P. Blavatsky's works, there is adequate internal evidence in them of their author's intimate acquaintance with the higher *lamaistic* teachings, into which she claimed to have been initiated."

William Emmette Coleman in his laborious and absurd lucubrations claimed to have proved that H. P. B.'s writings were an ignorant patchwork of piracy — and Arthur Lillie, another self-styled "authority," long ago "proved" her to be "unacquainted with even the bare rudiments of real Buddhism." It is sad that you would cite these theorists after sixty years of contrary evidence.

The Oxford scholar, and great Japanese authority on Mahayana Buddhism, Professor D. T. Suzuki, is not the only qualified Orientalist who has negated those tattered Victorian "critics"¹⁰!

In 1925, Basil Crump (for eleven years Editor of *The London Law Times*) and Alice Leighton Cleather (one of the twelve private students of H. P. Blavatsky) were privileged to come into close touch with His Holiness the Tashi Lama of Tibet, on the occasion of His visit to Peking, China.¹¹ At His personal request, they undertook the republication of H. P. B.'s *The Voice of the Silence*, endorsed by His Holiness as ". . . the only true exposition in English of the

9. Chief Interpreter to His Excellency, Lonchen Satra, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary to the Government of India; Political Staff Aide to H. H. the Dalai Lama; eminent Orientalist and, at the time of his death, Lecturer in Tibetan to the University of Calcutta. *Op. cit.*

10. See *The Canadian Theosophist*, June, 1933. p. 100.

11. Re: Tashi Lama, see the highest commendations of His late Holiness by Sir Charles Bell, recent British Political Representative to Tibet, *Tibet, Past and Present*, p. 84; and Sven Hedin, famed explorer, one of few Westerners to have received an audience with H. H., *Trans-Himalaya*, Macmillan & Co., 1909.

great Heart Doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism.”¹² With the assistance of His Excellency, Wang Ming Ching, one of the Tashi Lama's private secretaries, they re-issued the original text, prefaced by a note in the personal script of His Holiness. ¹³

You have avoided every one of these extremely pertinent facts — apparently because they do not coincide with the clever plot of your interesting story book!!

III. TIBETAN ADEPTS

Priestess of the Occult cites the testimony of W. W. Rockhill as proof that the existence of a great Tibetan brotherhood of Initiates is a hashish pipe dream. Tibetan lamas are supposed to have assured him that no such order of Sages now exists and that “ . . . not even the wisest and most revered among them possessed such [super physical] power today. . . .” (*Priestess of the Occult*, p. 30.)

If the lamas told Rockhill that, they must have had good reasons for resenting his profane snooping into their private affairs. H. P. B. declared more than sixty years ago that no lama would ever admit a curious infidel into their secrets and sanctuaries — no *Gelugpa* would do *meipo* or magic for the profane, or beyond the precincts of the lamasery. One lama, perhaps only a little less ignorant than those he professes to teach, could reveal nothing. Another, if he be an *Initiated Lama, would not!*

That Rockhill, or anyone else, has failed to find Madame Blavatsky's Adepts in Tibet is proof of nothing. One of these Masters himself wrote, “Those whom we desire to know us will find us at the very frontiers. (Others) . . . would not find us were they to go to L'hassa with an army!”¹⁴ Rockhill's “evidence” is as assumptive

12. It is significant that Madame Blavatsky is the only Western scholar or religious leader ever to have received the endorsement or cooperation of the High Priests of the Northern and Southern Schools of Buddhism (Tibet and Ceylon), as well as the support of the leading native pandits of India. See H. S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. III, pp. 156-205, 277-79, 2nd Edition.

13. See *The Voice of the Silence, being Chosen Fragments from the Book of the Golden Precepts, translated and annotated by “H. P. B.”*, reprinted and published under the auspices of The Chinese Buddhist Research Society, Peking, 1927.

14. See *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 4.

and as worthless as most of the other "authoritative facts" you cite. A much more reliable witness, an eminent man of science, an Honorary Director of the American Museum of Natural History, that great Asia explorer, Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews, personally saw the Chief of Tibet's *Gelugpa* Lamas, spiritual leader of 150,000,000 Buddhists, perform an act of apparent *Magic* before thousands in Peking, China, 1926.

His Holiness, the Tashi Lama, on his aforementioned tour of China, was implored by the native priests to "bring down rain by his Magic" and end a withering drought that had gripped the country-side for five months. After extended entreaties, He at last reluctantly consented to the plea; promising that if it did not rain within the forthcoming two weeks he would appear in public at high noon on the fourteenth day and promptly incite rain. At the end of the prescribed period there was no sign of rain, the land was dying and sweltering under an even more torrid heat. Dr. Andrews recalls the amusement of the foreign wiseacres when the Tashi Lama mounted a Buddhist altar before expectant thousands and, beneath a blazing sun, invoked the rain gods. Not a cloud in the sky — *but four hours later the streets of Peking were showered with rivers of water, breaking one of the most prolonged droughts in its history!*¹⁵

Priestess of the Occult makes no mention of this whatever, curiously enough! *Not even the most modern-equipped meteorological observatory in the world could duplicate the feat of this Tibetan Adept*¹⁶ *if it even were a simple case of anticipation or foreknowledge!* Here is *proof* for the most discriminative — but not for your book, "carefully" documented as it is!

IV. H. P. B.'s MORALITY

H. P. Blavatsky maintained that the first prerequisite of practical Occultism is absolute physical and mental purity,¹⁷ reaffirming the immemorial austerity of the East. You have painted H. P. B. in

15. See *Beware Familiar Spirits*, John Mulholland, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York and London, 1938, pp. 323-24.

16. The Tashi Lamas were described by H. P. Blavatsky as "High Initiates." See *Isis Unveiled* Vol. II, p. 618, and *The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 247.

17. See *Studies in Occultism*, Theosophical University Press, 1946, pp. 4-7.

the scarlets of the Paris *demi-monde* and have mothered on her scandal and bastard!

Your predecessor, Bechofer-Roberts, believed Mme. Blavatsky to have been a liar, and was not confounded when he discovered the name of a "Dr. Leon Oppenheim" appended to a certain medical document. He regarded it as a flagrant invention before he troubled himself to check his suspicions. Bechofer-Roberts, on examining the civil records of the city of Würzburg, Germany, found a celebrated gynaecologist, a specialist, Dr. Leon Oppenheimer, resident practitioner, 1867-1912. (See *The Mysterious Madame*.)

But you declare that the following is ". . . another apocryphal document scrambled together . . . signed by the misspelled name of a Würzburg physician. . . . To make the paper more impressive, Madame added the signatures of her most prominent German Theosophists. . . . Madame's facility with pen and ink. . . ."¹⁸ Ah, a forgery, no less!

It is significant that though challenging this document, you do not reproduce it, being even more prudent in the matter than was Bechofer-Roberts who, tottering on a fragile hypothesis, abridged it unmercifully!

The facts are that on the insistence of friends, eager to still the yap of slander's chatter, H. P. B. consented to a medical examination and received the following certificate:

"The undersigned testifies, as requested, that Madame Blavatsky of Bombay — New York Corresponding Secretary of the Theosophical Society — is at present under the medical treatment of the undersigned. She suffers from *Anteflexio Uteri*, most probably from the day of her birth; because, as proven by a minute examination, she has never borne a child, nor has she had any gynaecological illness.

(signed) Dr. Leon Oppenheim,
Würzburg, 3rd November, 1885.

The signature of Dr. Leon Oppenheim is
hereby officially attested. Würzburg,
3rd November, 1885.

The Royal Medical Officer of the District.

(Signed) Dr. Med. Roeder.

18. *Priestess of the Occult*, p. 276.

We the undersigned hereby certify that the above is a correct translation of the German original now before us. Würzburg,
November 4, 1885.

(Signed) Hübbe-Schleiden
(Signed) Franz Gebhard."

As noted, the above is a *translation* from the German — and so, of course, your sly trap set for an unwary reader is simply a farce, for the Doctor's name is not misspelt but only an obvious *Anglicized* rendition! It was pointed out at the time that the concluding phrase regarding "gynaecological illness," in the original, nullified any possibility of *miscarriage*, etc. Hence, this is all distinct *proof* that H. P. Blavatsky *never had a child* — except in the befouled fancy of scandal-mongering, 19th-Century vilifiers!¹⁹ (Document now in the archives of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, India.)²⁰

Your theory of forgery is absurdly stupid. Drs. Oppenheim, Roeder, Schleiden, as well as Gebhard, *were fully aware of this document*. It was made public during their lifetimes and after H. P. B.'s death. It is dealt with at length in the letters of the Countess Wachtmeister, widow of the Swedish ambassador to London, as well as in other contemporary literature.²¹

In 1892, Mme. Blavatsky received an unconditional, public retraction of libel from the then most influential of American newspapers, *The New York Sun*.²² The paper's legal staff, inspired by all the resourcefulness of its brilliant Elihu Root, ". . . before Judge Beach of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, confessed in

19. Regarding the obscure origin of these perennial slanders, V. S. Solovioff, H. P. B.'s most virulent "exposer," wrote, "This is how it came: she had wished to save the honour of a friend, and had adopted the child of this friend as her own. She never parted from him, she educated him herself, and called him her son in the face of the world." See *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, p. 141.

20. See *The Personal Memoirs of H. P. Blavatsky*, compiled by Mary K. Neff, and published by E. P. Dutton & Co., 1938.

21. See *Old Diary Leaves*, by Olcott, Vol. III, pp. 319-21, *et al.*

22. See *Sun* Editorial, Sept. 26, 1892.

open court their inability to prove their charge of immorality. . . .²³ As the Editors of the *Sun* conceded in their pages, charges of *immorality* were "without solid foundation . . . not sustained by evidence." *Thus the only time the question came to legal-court, the traducers recanted!*

If Mme. Blavatsky ever assured Prof. Aksakov that any "rumours of immorality" that he chanced to hear were true, it was for an obvious and diplomatic reason. She was working and battling day and night in the vanguard of American Spiritualism "for what little truth there is in it," surrounded by the *elite* of that army — Sargent, Lippett, Owens, and the others — she could not afford to be drawn into any racketing controversy over trivialities and personal recriminations in an hour of such public crisis. *She could only have vindicated herself by implicating Aksakov's personal friend, Baron Meyendorff, in the first instance — while in the second, his relative and her old and bitter enemy, D. D. Home, stood ready at the Professor's ear anxious to whisper new vilifications!* Rather than scandalize the movement in the eyes of the public, or feed fodder to the asinine scribes of mockery, *she sacrificed herself* — and kept silence.

Why is this dossier of facts missing from *Priestess of the Occult*, any informed reader can ask. Simply because it is an unshakable contravention to the yellow-journal fables, rescued from a morgue of dead slanders by a hasty scribe!

V. THE S. P. R.'S "EXPOSURE"

Lastly, *Priestess of the Occult*, with its volley of allegation, is no more proof of "fraudulent conjuring palmed off as 'divine miracles'" than was Richard Hodgson's devious *Proceedings No. IX of the Society for Psychical Research!* In every paragraph ever written on the occult phenomena of this strange Russian woman, NOT ONE SINGLE FACT OF FRAUD WAS EVER OFFERED!

To begin with, sensing the weakness of Hodgson's bumbling "exposure," you attempt to build a wall of infallibility around this general of the prosecution.²⁴ But with all of his fine personal recom-

23. See William Q. Judge, a Co-Founder of the Theosophical Society, and H. P. B.'s attorney, in *The Path*, March, 1891.

24. *Priestess of the Occult*, pp. 238-39.

mendations, you fail to mention the sharp criticism from his fellow scientists that he brought upon his own head by his wild surmises and laughable "detections"!

Psychical Research as a science has advanced far into those fields once pioneered by H. P. B. — since Hodgson stomped across the stage! You fail to recall that he made a fool of himself more than once in that domain, *precisely the particular subject of the "Blavatsky Case," viz., physical supernormal phenomena!*

Read what one of the most eminent investigators of Europe had to say on the matter:

" . . . I have not been able to agree with the assertions of the English investigators (Sidgwick, Hodgson, and the conjuror, Maskeyne of London, 1895-6) that she [Eusapia Paladino] worked with small apparatus smuggled into the sitting. I not only examined her dress with a ruler before every sitting, or had a special dress made for her, but I also had occasion to examine her whole luggage down to the last needle. Not the slightest suspicious objects, such as are required by every conjuror, could be discovered. . . . Eusapia Paladino's performances have been examined several times by eminent conjurors (such as Rybka of Warsaw on the 13th December, 1893), and have been acknowledged in their written testimony. Thus the famous American conjuror, M. Howard, [Thurston], said the following on the occasion of Eusapia's sittings in America: —

" 'I have been a conjuror all my life, and up to now have exposed numerous mediums who produced physical phenomena, but I am convinced that this medium (Eusapia), actually produced elevations of the table, and I undertake to contribute a thousand dollars to a charity if anyone can prove to me that Eusapia is unable to raise a table into the air without trick, without fraud and without help, excluding the use of fraudulent manipulations of knees or feet or any other part of her body or utensils!'"²⁵

Thurston was introduced to Paladino by Dr. Hereward Carrington, now Director of the American Psychical Research Institute and

25. See Dr. Baron Von Schrenck-Notzing, *The Phenomena of Materialization*, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., Ltd., London, 1923. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1923. pp. 9-10, Eng. Ed.

himself a conjuror. Thurston's challenge to skeptics still stood at the day of his death.²⁶

Here we have the author of the Blavatsky "exposé," Hodgson, and his colleague who introduced that infamous Report, Sidgwick — after an additional ten years of experience in matters psychic — "exposing" Paladino, recognized by the world's leading Psychical Researchers as the greatest medium ever to submit to laboratory test conditions!²⁷ Here is Hodgson, again with his "expert" (remember Netherclift?), this time a stage conjuror. After a series of sittings at Cambridge, Hodgson and his fellow-investigators declared the medium to be a palpably fraudulent trickster, well-skilled in the art of conjuring!²⁸ And still more absurd — this monkeyish trio (who saw nothing, heard nothing, and admitted nothing) boasted of having detected the manipulation of a hidden jugglery gadget, illusionary apparatus that no other experienced investigator even sniffed in twenty years of intimate, test-controlled examination!

So much for Hodgson's fictitious "authority," so much for his "logic and scientific analysis"! If he could "expose" the greatest medium in the annals of Psychical Research when he repeatedly witnessed her marvels at first-hand under his own control and conditions — *what more could he "expose" in the case of Blavatsky when he gathered his evidence second- and third-hand, years after the phenomena, and with a public-confessed hypocrite and liar (Mme. Coulomb) as his CHIEF WITNESS? !!*²⁹

26. See *The Invisible World*, Bernard Ackerman, Inc., New York, 1946.

27. *Ibid.*

28. See *Eusapia Paladino*, by H. Sidgwick, *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. VII, p. 148. *This unfortunate "exposure" was later disowned by Hodgson's own colleagues of the S. P. R.* See *Proceedings of the S. P. R.*, Vol. XXIII, Part LIX, 1909.

29. For Mme. Coulomb's confession of falsehood and hypocrisy, see her pamphlet. She "confesses" to have been a confederate in the foulest of crimes, as an "accomplice of Mme. Blavatsky in her conjuring performances over a period of years." If it is proved that no such "fraud" existed, the characterization of Mme. Coulomb still stands! In anticipation of a court trial, H. P. B. secured from the Government at Cairo, Egypt, documentary evidence of Mme. Coulomb's police records. See *H. P. B., In Memory of H. P. Blavatsky, By some of her Pupils*, London, 1891, p. 15. Reprinted as *Centennial Edition*, 1931.

But in the problem at hand, you overlook the fact that Hodgson's own evidence belies the much-flaunted "accuracy." As a case in point, one chosen from many, what have you to say on this matter:

The two chief witnesses of the S. P. R. were Mme. Coulomb and V. S. Solovioff.³⁰ The chief witness of Mme. Blavatsky was Col. H. S. Olcott. Now Hodgson's first witness testifies, ". . . Col. Olcott was *not* a confederate in any of these frauds of Mme. Blavatsky but the victim of credulity."³¹ Hodgson, careful not to discredit this valuable witness by any fabulous speculations of his own, agrees, "I must state with emphasis that it is not my opinion that Col. Olcott has taken any deliberate and active part in this fraud."³²

But now comes the *dénouement*: the S. P. R.'s second star witness, Solovioff, brought to court ten years after their first self-judged trial had miscarried, blandly testifies, "Madame Blavatsky told me . . . 'He [Olcott] has very often helped me in [fraudulent] phe-

30. Solovioff proved a poor witness for the S. P. R. when he specifically *nullified* Hodgson's climaxing hypothesis, i.e., that Blavatsky was an undercover agent of the Czar, scheming to overthrow British rule in India. Hodgson gave pages of "valuable evidence" to prove his charge, which he considered the only possible explanation for her enduring sacrifices and hardships. Solovioff labeled the charge "baseless and impossible." See p. 114 *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, by V. S. Solovioff, abridged and translated on behalf of the S. P. R. by Walter Leaf, with an Introduction by H. Sidgwick. London, 1895. The charge was an obvious appeal by Hodgson for political hysteria to rescue his flimsy "case" from obscurity—much as were Gertrude Marvin Williams' breath-bated whisperings about Theosophical "swastikas" and Nazi "Aryans"! Hodgson's "evidence was as valuable here as it was elsewhere"!

31. See *Some Account of My Association with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884*, by E. Coulomb, published at the Lawrence Asylum Press, Madras, India, 1884. p. 62.

32. See *The Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society, Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, No. IX, p. 310. Actually, the S. P. R. never investigated the psychic phenomena of H. P. B. It appointed a Committee for that purpose. But neither did the Committee do any investigating. It appointed an agent, Richard Hodgson, but neither did he investigate the phenomena—for the phenomena in question had taken place months (and often years) before! He gathered dossiers of battered "testimony" from "witnesses" now under consideration.

nomena, both over there and here . . . ?”³³ Needless to say, Solovioff offered only his testimony as proof of this alleged “confession,” and the editor for the S. P. R. (so professedly critical in the interests of science) adds with a flippant *naïveté*, “ . . . the simple assertion . . . is sufficient. . . .”³⁴

But then, Mrs. Williams, who was the liar — Mme. Coulomb or V. S. Solovioff? And who was the dupe?!

Priestess of the Occult never hesitates once in its abuse of H. P. Blavatsky to cite any of these contradictions, falsifications, or suppressions of the *prosecution*. If the book is “carefully documented” why so many strange and important eliminations?

Now, as you are doubtless well aware, no actual, tangible, or *legal* evidence was ever offered on Madame Blavatsky’s alleged guilt by the S. P. R. Committee or anyone else — except in just one instance. This was that of the letters rented by the dismissed janitress, Mme. Coulomb, to a Madras missionary society.³⁵ These letters were said to have been transcribed in the handwriting of Mme. Blavatsky, the texts confessing fraud.³⁶ *But you withhold from your*

33. See *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, p. 157.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Coulomb was expelled from the Theosophical Society on several charges, among them the misappropriation and embezzlement of official housekeeping funds. Neither she, nor her apologists, have ever denied or contested a single one of the charges, fully documented as they were by depositions and warrants! See *Report of an Investigation into Charges against Madame Blavatsky*, by the Indian T. S. Convention Committee, Madras, 1885.

36. The informant sought to substantiate these letters by “exposing” sliding panels and hidden doors in Mme. Blavatsky’s private rooms at the Headquarters. But it was proved that this fraudulent apparatus, allegedly constructed months and years before for the production of false phenomena, was really the handiwork of Mme. Coulomb’s husband, a professional carpenter; that the engineering had been done without H. P. B.’s knowledge and in her absence when the Coulombs had exclusive access to her quarters; and that the entire scheme was a crude attempt by the fabricators to extort money from unsuspecting Society officials. Even the missionaries’ own investigator admitted that the apparatus was “. . . made without the slightest attempt at concealment . . . evidently of recent construction.” J. D. B. Gribble, *Report of an Examination into the Blavatsky Correspondence*, Madras, 1884. p. 29. These “conjuror panels” were unplaned, unpainted, and unfinished, hence had not been available for “fake miracles” months and

readers the fact that their owners refused to allow any Theosophist to see them; refused to submit the letters to an open, public examination; refused to allow them to be photographed; refused them to be traced; refused their reproduction in any facsimile; — and besides an “expert” hired by the missionaries themselves, no one ever saw the letters except Hodgson and his “expert,” Netherclift (who later had the authority of his handwriting “expertship” and detective powers laughed out of court by London’s leading counsel)!³⁷

It is argued that if Mme. Blavatsky was innocent she would have haled her slanderers into court. You admit that the ramifications of the “Blavatsky Case” did once come under the law. General H. R. Morgan charged Mme. Coulomb with forgery. “ . . . [The missionaries] took the initiative and sued General Morgan for libelling Madame Coulomb. . . .”³⁸ But with this single, cryptic statement you leave the narrative dangling in mid-air — and you quite prudently fail to inform your readers on the outcome of this all-important event! You suppress the fact that when a contest seemed certain, Mme. Coulomb herself stepped into the picture, over the heads of her would-be protectors, and petitioned the court to drop the prosecution charges entered in her own behalf! She voluntarily withdrew proceedings, even though Morgan himself sought to press the case to a hearing.³⁹ That is one mystery your book never at-

years before — when the actual phenomena had occurred. Theosophists displayed the machinations for public examination for months, and exposed the “exposers” by dossiers of testimony from reputable witnesses. See T. S. Convention Report, 1885. See Kingsland, Besant, *et al.* See *Defence of Madame Blavatsky*, Beatrice Hastings, 1937.

37. The S. P. R. Committee claimed to have seen some letters allegedly written by H. P. B. to Mme. Coulomb, but their Report, (p. 204) for some mysterious reason, suspiciously and specifically fails to identify either these letters or any incriminating passages — an inexcusable omission, seeing that Mme. Coulomb, as housekeeper at Headquarters, actually received some harmlessly innocent genuine messages. What the S. P. R. Committee never claimed to have seen were fraud-confessing telegrams, since their fabrication was beyond the talent of even the Coulombs. See Beatrice Hastings’ *Defence of Madame Blavatsky*, Vol. II, p. 32. See also *Was she a Charlatan?*, appendix to *The Real H. P. Blavatsky*, William Kingsland, John M. Watkins, London, 1928.

38. See *Priestess of the Occult*, p. 255.

39. See Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. III, p. 226. *Et al.*

tempts to solve, why Mme. Coulomb backed down before *her* accusers when she once had them in court! But the answer is simple, viz., the open examination of the elusive "Blavatsky-Coulomb letters" would have unveiled their forgery, with all of their artless "confessions" and interpolated explanations of fraud! That would have been one exposure that would have ripped Hodgson's fantasies to pitiful shreds, indeed!

It is an important fact of significance that of all the witnesses to the disputed phenomena, not one single member throughout all of India resigned at the "exposure"! Clearly, Hodgson had not proved his case. The only thing he had proved was that lax observers and the accompanying conditions had not always *pre-cluded* the possibility of fraud; but, in any case, this only covered *some* aspects of *some* of the phenomena.⁴⁰ Hodgson's "monumental analysis" was swarming with *suggestio falsi*: 'it is possible,' 'undoubtedly,' 'plausible,' 'might,' 'we might suppose,' 'very probably,' 'quite likely,' etc., etc., *ad nauseam!* Like every other "exposer" of Blavatsky, Hodgson contradicts himself and all others on essential statements.⁴¹ How far Hodgson could extend his unhappy faculty of 'detection' is a matter of history. What the *unchecked* conclusions of a novice detective (on his first case) might be, is proof of nothing — when a verdict of "Blavatsky innocent" would have outraged the ruling dogmas of Society and Science. Especially so, *when ten years of additional experience did not diminish the same detective's profound and gross incompetence!*

40. There are evidences for H. P. B.'s supernormal powers that can only be discredited by imputing falsehood to socially prominent witnesses. See A. P. Sinnett's *The Occult World Phenomena and the S. P. R.*, George Redway, London, 1886, Annie Besant's *H. P. Blavatsky and the Masters of the Wisdom*, T. P. H., London, 1907, *et al.* Even the S. P. R.'s Solovieff, in his book, admitted that "there is one thing, it is true, that I cannot explain: how she produced and stopped at will the various raps which were heard at a great distance all round her." Even this critic, styled by the S. P. R. editor as her "bitterest enemy," found the most simple of her phenomena *inexplicable!*

41. See W. Kingsland's *The Real H. P. Blavatsky*, pp. 270-72.

VI. THE MAHATMA LETTERS

As for the recent reiteration by the Hare brothers of Hodgson's original speculations on the "Mahatma Letters,"⁴² it is hardly a "scholarly and devastating study."⁴³ The charge that H. P. B. assumed a fictitious script under the guise of non-existent Adepts has been ably exposed by C. Jinarajadasa in his *Did Madame Blavatsky Forge the Mahatma Letters?*⁴⁴ Why did you not advise your readers that here they could have photo facsimiles of the original letters before them — and judge the matter for themselves!

If you have ever seen the Report of the S. P. R. Committee, you, of course, know that *Hodgson's own handwriting experts at first independently came to the conclusion that the Mahatma Letters were NOT H. P. B.'s production!*⁴⁵ This agrees with the analysis of Herr Schultz, Official Caligrapher to the Court of His Majesty, the Emperor of Germany.⁴⁶

Later, Hodgson affirms, they retracted this consideration after

42. Letters from Tibetan Initiates, to A. P. Sinnett and others, expounding the abstruse doctrines and philosophical subtleties of the Primordial Wisdom. See *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, compiled by A. T. Barker, T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., London, 1923. *Et al.*

43. In the *Occult Review* of 1926, William Loftus Hare boasted that, on his personal examination of the calligraphic and grammatical content of the Mahatma Letters, he could safely predict that their publication would soon bring the towers of Theosophical pretension to earth with a crash — the end of "Madame Blavatsky's Theosophy" indeed! But his prophecy was as inappropriate as the S. P. R.'s previous predictions; and when the expected collapse failed to materialize, he marshalled an imposing attack ten years later to save himself: *Who Wrote the Mahatma Letters?* Williams & Norgate, Ltd., London, 1937. After twenty anxious years of waiting, Gertrude Marvin Williams comes to the "rescue" of this weary prophet!

44. Mr. Jinarajadasa, on reviewing the original evidence, proves that letters were "precipitated" occultly, or "apported" in the terminology of modern Psychological Research, entirely without the physical intervention of H. P. B. — and oftentimes without her knowledge, and even bearing messages sometimes contrary to her own opinions or desires.

45. See S. P. R. *Report*, pp. 282-83.

46. See *Some Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*, A. P. Sinnett, G. Redway, London, 1886. Appendix.

a personal interview with him. *It seems that he was even more expert than his "experts"!* But it is interesting to note that the published Report gives only one signed affidavit regarding caligraphic testimony, this by Netherclift (*we have no word at all from the other "authority," Sims!*) — and Hodgson has, very peculiarly, expunged from it every reference to "Mahatma Letters"!! *The fact is that no expert, no professional caligraphist, has ever publicly proclaimed the Mahatma Letters to be forgeries!!* All of the declaration of Netherclift remaining only deals with the "Blavatsky-Coulomb letters" — and even here the evidence is worthless, *no comparison is made with Mme. Coulomb's own handwriting, no caligraphic proof is given, no illustrations cited, the conclusion is strangely worded — and the contents of the letters examined are not even identified by Netherclift!*⁴⁷

Again, if it could not be proven that the Mahatma Letters were in a script and grammar *wholly dissimilar* to H. P. B.'s own writing, still there would be no proof whatever that the said letters were not messages from extraneous Teachers. It is quite obvious that the critics know little about the subject at hand, and even less about the subject-problem in general. When Hodgson first advanced his "assumed script" theory, Psychical Research was in its ignorant infancy — and Hodgson, one of the newly-born babes. Listen to what James H. Hyslop, PH.D., LL.D., Secretary of the American Society for Psychical Research, late Professor of Logic and Ethics in Columbia University, had to say in his book, *Life After Death* (E. P. Dutton & Co., N. Y. 1918):

"The careful psychic researcher always admits the message, *whatever its origin*, comes through the mind of the medium and is colored by it in the transmission, whether by interpretation, conscious or unconscious, *or by the habits of the organism itself.* [Italics mine. W. A. C.] He always expects the theory of their origin to be qualified by these influences. . . . He does not expect any intelligent person to read the facts as if they were living communications or telegrams. He expects the reader has some intelligence above a savage in the examination of the facts"!

47. See *Report of the S. P. R. Committee, Appendix XV, Part 3, pp. 381-82.*

Professor Hyslop continues⁴⁸ to prove that this fusion of communicating intelligences extends especially to the handwriting, so that the script of the message may reveal, more or less, certain idiosyncrasies of the psychic agent or messenger. So that even were Hodgson's charges entirely correct in this instance, they might only *support* the defence!

This is not to infer that Madame Blavatsky was a "medium" in the *Spiritualistic* sense of the word — but is an analogous comparison to telepathy with the "dead." The alternate, telepathic communication with the living, has always been understood in its corresponding similarities, even as Col. Olcott himself observed at the time, "Precipitated writing will usually resemble that of the medium. The same rule applies to all intermediary agents through whom psychic writing and messages are transmitted."⁴⁹ The possibility of a false random identification between agent and communicator was repeatedly acknowledged by the Mahatmas themselves in their letters.

Telepathic transmission, with its attending difficulties, is the only explanation that sane logic reserves for the infamously celebrated "Kiddle incident." Your attempt to justify the charge of plagiarism on the grounds of "plain carelessness or weariness" is hardly intelligible.⁵⁰ To have sat with pen and paper and transcribed simple passages from a common journal would hardly have been necessary for anyone with even half the literary talent of H. P. B. Have you forgotten the testimony of your own witness, Count Witte, whom you cite so eagerly when he speculates adversely — "The Moscow editor, Katkov, famous in the annals of Russian journalism, spoke to me in

48. P. 212-13, ff.

49. *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. II, p. 106.

50. It was shown by critics that one of the Mahatma Letters, received by A. P. Sinnett, Editor of India's leading newspaper and prominent Theosophist, and later published in his *The Occult World* (June 1881) contained random phrases and sentences corresponding to an essay by Mr. H. Kiddle, previously printed in the Spiritualist *Banner of Light* (Sept. 1880). Kiddle charged piracy, but it was shown that there could have been no motive for plagiarism and the interpolated phrases in question were the product of telepathic confusion (in the letter's occult transmission) — the unconscious assimilation of forgotten memories, the communicator having been familiar with Kiddle's article, although Mme. Blavatsky herself had never seen it.

the highest terms of praise about her literary gifts. . . ." ⁵¹ And why not mention that her Russian publishers offered her an exclusive contract on the favorable terms as granted only one other author, the celebrated Turgenev, (an offer, incidentally, which she rejected on her Tibetan Teacher's orders — so she could write, unprofitably, for Theosophy!) ⁵²

Plainly enough, she had no need to resort to *tedious* copywork, especially if she were "weary"!

"However startling and impracticable the theory, that two persons, who have (it is alleged) been clever enough to carry on undetected the fraud of personating for five years several adepts — not one of whom resembles the other; — two persons, one of whom, at any rate, is a fair master of English (Sinnett) and can hardly be

51. Mrs. Williams "carefully documents" her book by omitting Witte's "recollections" that are manifestly contrary to fact, and recites his parade of "old rumors" that are related without *corroboration* or *proof* of any kind! There are only two instances which Witte mentioned that by his own account rested on his own knowledge. The first was his visits to Mme. Blavatsky's flower shop; and the second — Mrs. Williams very conveniently fails to mention — "On one occasion she (H. P. B.) caused a closed piano in an adjacent room to emit sounds as if invisible hands were playing upon it. This was done in my presence, at the instance of one of the guests. . . . Let him who still doubts the non-material origin and the independent existence of the soul in man consider the personality of Mme. Blavatsky. During her earthly existence, she housed a spirit which was, no doubt, independent of physical or physiological being. . . . I cannot help feeling that there was something demoniac in that extraordinary woman." (See *Memoirs*, New York, 1921, pp. 5-10.) Witte was decidedly "critical," and relates that as a young boy, "I looked on them as mere sleight-of-hand performances." But his *mature conclusion* was that there was "something demoniac" and independent of the physical in the strange phenomena! See Iverson L. Harris, "A Refutation of Slanders Against the Foundress of the Theosophical Society," in *Helena Petrovna Blavatsky*, by K. Tingley, Theosophical University Press, 1921.

52. That Mme. Blavatsky, far from deriving any financial benefits from her activities, only suffered therein; she possessed no financial or property interests, had no legal power in any of the monetary affairs of the Theosophical Society, and received no salaries. She was thoroughly vindicated of any malicious charge by the solicitors, Sanderson & Co., forcing a retraction of libel from one of Calcutta's leading papers. See A. P. Sinnett's *Incidents*, etc. Even the S. P. R. exonerated her from any financial-scheming. See *Report of Committee*, etc. p. 314.

suspected of paucity of original ideas, should turn for a bit of plagiarism to a journal as the *Banner*, widely known and read by most English knowing Spiritualists; and above all, pilfer their borrowed sentences from a discourse of a conspicuous new convert, whose public utterances were at the very time being read and welcomed by every *medium* and Spiritualist; however improbable all this and much more, yet any alternative seems more welcome than simple truth" . . . wrote the Master himself at the time.⁵³

The persistence of your resurrected charges it appears to me is a greater problem itself than any supposed "plagiarism." As a competent journalist yourself — you should know better!

And in relation to the Mahatma Letters, may I take the impertinent liberty to point out an apparently *deliberate distortion* on your own part that has doubtless aroused the suspicions of even your most credulous readers. Quoting from H. P. B.'s sister, Mme. Vera Jelihovsky, (in an apparent attempt to make it appear that she repudiated and disowned H. P. B. in 1892 — *although you fail to credit Vera's eager defence of her sister against Solovioff, later!*)⁵⁴ who writes, "We her nearest relatives never heard her speak of these enigmatic personages, [the 'Brothers'] until 1873-74 after she was settled in New York." . . . you add, "This repudiates the 1870 letter to the aunt, Mme. Fadeef."⁵⁵

But, note this, you fail to explain How or Why this fact repudiates the said letter. This specific letter, the first Mahatmic message on record, is truly a thorn in the side of skepticism! Richard Hodgson dismissed it on the theory that it was the product of forgery because Mme. Fadeef was, quite likely, a *liar* and, in any case, probably untrustworthy because of her Russian patriotism!⁵⁶ But the letter,

53. *Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 421.

54. See *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, p. 285, ff.

55. *Priestess of the Occult*, Appendix A, p. 318.

56. Hodgson's unscrupulous appeal to racial prejudice. Mme. Fadeef: an aunt, a Russian, *ergo* — a liar! A brilliant example of detective talent — Hodgson could not forget his "Russian spy" theory, *even though H. P. B. had already been exonerated of the charge by the Foreign Department of the British Government of India*, after extended investigation! See Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. II, pp. 228-31, Vol. III, pp. 3-9.

to begin with, was *unsigned*, it made no mention of "Brothers," no one ever claimed that H. P. B. "spoke of these enigmatic personages" to her relatives before 1873 — in fact, she herself writes, "She [my aunt] is the kindest, the shyest, the meekest individual. All her life her money and all is for others. Touch her religion and she becomes a fury. I never speak with her about Masters."⁵⁷

Are you trying to put contradictory words into the mouths of defence witnesses, thereby *discrediting* their testimony? Anything to destroy this letter! — "written by Madame Blavatsky about 1879, or 1880, when the idea of corresponding with one of the 'Brothers' appears to have been first mooted," according to Richard Hodgson's wild hypothesis!⁵⁸ But this agent of the S. P. R. seemed blissfully unaware that letters from the Brothers had been occultly received by Olcott, W. Q. Judge, and others in America, *as early as 1875!!*⁵⁹

A. O. Hume, the noted ornithologist and Founder of the Indian National Congress, was well prepared to parry the critic's blundering attacks — for Hume had himself communicated with the Brothers. "That the Brothers exist I now know, but the proofs that I have had have been purely subjective and therefore useless to anyone but myself — unless you indeed consider it proof of their existence that I here, at Simla, receive letters from one of them, my immediate teacher, dropped upon my table, I living alone in my house and Madame Blavatsky, Col. Olcott and all their chelas, etc., being thousands of miles distant."⁶⁰ Richard Hodgson was perplexed when Hume, arch-skeptic and critic that he was, looked the *agent-exposé* straight in the eye and testified, "Madame really had and has Oriental Occultists of considerable though limited powers behind her; . . ."⁶¹

Neither the 1885 Society for Psychical Research, nor its novice investigator, were prepared to rationally examine the life, work, or

57. See *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, F. A. Stokes Co., New York, p. 154.

58. *Report of S. P. R. Committee*, p. 292.

59. See Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. I, p. 17, *et seq.*

60. *Letters of H. P. B.*, etc., Letter CLXXXVIIa, p. 353.

61. *Report of S. P. R. Committee*, p. 275.

teachings of this baffling enigma, H. P. B., whose strange phenomena, produced without darkness, cabinet, "circle" or paraphernalia, embraced the whole field of modern Psychical Science. Where the subject of every current investigation is a "medium", a will-less or entranced slave of unrecognized *forces* and the vortex of furtive, spasmodic and often stupid manifestations, here was an *Occultist*, a philosophical messenger to the spiritually-dying West, directing and explaining every successive step of the strange, inexplicable drama!

Significantly, the Editor, Librarian, and Research Officer of this same Society for Psychical Research, Theodore Besterman, writing in *The Aryan Path* (May, 1931) appealed to Psychical Researchers and Theosophists alike to drop the disputed question of H. P. Blavatsky's phenomena and alleged fraudulence, and to concentrate on her writings which, he wrote, "merit the most serious consideration."⁶² He fully recognizes "the unquestionable service she did in making the Oriental Scriptures known to the West." This is good evidence that Hodgson's childish sneer at H. P. B.'s "pretension to scholarship" is out of date — even in his own academy!⁶³

"Mr. Besterman also says that Hodgson's conclusion was only that of 'a plain and uninspired individual' and carries no final authority.' He suggests that the results of recent psychical research would have greatly modified Hodgson's outlook if he had known them in 1884. The Society for Psychical Research, warned by past experiences, now disclaims responsibility for facts, reports,

62. And well they might, for this "Theosophia" can solve more than one riddle that baffles Psychic Research, v.g., long before Professors Morselli, Schrenck-Notzing, and Geley discovered the "revolutionary fact" that the séance-room's "phantoms" are principally the objective product of collective imagination and subconscious thought, H. P. B. taught that they were but rarely "spirit-entities." She called them "portrait-statues" of the dead or *living*; and maintained that these "pictures in the Astral Light" were palpably objectified through the Linga Sharira, the Astral Body of the medium who "assimilat(es), unconsciously to himself, the pictures of the dead relatives and friends from the aura of the sitters." See A. P. Sinnett's *Incidents*, etc., p. 175. Cf. Schrenck-Notzing, *Phenomena of Materialisation*, pp. 28-36.

63. See C. J. Ryan's *H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement*, Theosophical University Press, 1937, p. 200.

or reasonings published in its *Proceedings*, leaving that with the authors.”⁶⁴ The past must defend *itself*, even to Richard Hodgson’s “crushing exposure”, said to have been once characterized by the late Sir William Barrett, F. R. S. (a President of the S. P. R.) as “a blot on the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*”!⁶⁵

Priestess of the Occult may now begin to appear somewhat less lustrous than when under the deceptive beam of *bouffant* laudation cast by hasty reviewers! Apparently your beliefs anent Blavatsky can be “disputed” — and, moreover, *DISPROVED on every major count!* As William Kingsland justly observed, “The world-wide influence of this great pioneer is becoming with each decade more firmly established”! And we might equally predict that those who still wave the muddy banner of infamy in her unflinching face, will some day lower it out of *self-respect*!

Dr. Baron Von Schrenck-Notzing once observed that in the domain of the Occult, “Too many exposures only expose the ignorance of the exposer!” And, it may be added, in reviewing *Priestess of the Occult* that the successful reception of such an “exposure” depends upon the docile gullibility of the applauders, ignorant of the history of the subject!

Profitably yours,

Walter A. Carrithers, Jr.,
463 North Second St.,
Fresno 2, California.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

65. See Dr. J. H. Cousins, *The Theosophist*, Oct., 1925.

SPECIAL NOTE: The writer fully acknowledges his obligation to the biographical works cited, and, although he can recommend most of them as pertinent to the issue, neither he nor the publishers can, of course, endorse all statements by the various writers. — W. A. C.

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